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K'inich Janaab Pakal II

K'uhul Baabel Ajaw

(Divine Lord of Palenque)



K'inich Janaab Pakal's portrait on occasion of ascension from Oval Palace Tablet

King of Palenque

Reign	27 July 615 – 29 August 683
<u>Coronation</u>	27 July 615
Predecessor	<u>Sak K'uk'</u>
Successor	<u>K'inich Kan Bahlam II</u>
Born	24 March 603 ^[N 1] <u>Palenque</u> (now in <u>Chiapas, Mexico</u>)
Died	29 August 683 (aged 80) Palenque
Burial	<u>Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque</u>
Spouse	Lady Tz'akbu Ajaw of <u>Uxte'k'uh</u> ^[1]
<u>Issue</u>	<u>K'inich Kan Bahlam II</u> <u>K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II</u> Tiwol Chan Mat (probable)

Father	K'an Mo' Hix
Mother	Sak K'uk'
Religion	Maya religion
Signature	

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%CA%BCinich_Janaab%CA%BC_Pakal

K'inich Janaab Pakal I (Mayan pronunciation: [k'ihnɨʃ xanaːb pakal]), also known as **Pacal** or **Pacal the Great** (March 24, 603 – August 29, 683), was *ajaw* of the *Maya* city-state of **Palenque** in the Late Classic period of *pre-Columbian Mesoamerican chronology*. He acceded to the throne in July 615 and ruled until his death. Pakal reigned 68 years^[N 2]—the *fifth-longest verified regnal period* of any sovereign monarch in history, the longest in world history for more than a millennium, and still the longest reign of any monarch in the history of *the Americas*. During his long rule, Pakal was responsible for the construction or extension of some of Palenque's most notable surviving inscriptions and monumental architecture. He is perhaps best known in popular culture for his depiction on the carved lid of his *sarcophagus*, which has become the subject of *pseudoarchaeological* speculations.

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Pakal the Great

GOVERNOR, TIME TRAVELER AND MAYAN ASTRONAUT

<https://www.chichenitza.com/blog/pakal-the-great>

Governor of Palenque, astronaut or time traveller? These are the theories about Pakal the Great.

Theories around Pakal the Great range from being an astronaut to a time traveller.



K'inich Janaab' Pakal was a Mayan governor of the Palenque region between the years 615 and 685, a period of advancement and prosperity for its inhabitants.

According to the history recorded in stone by the Mayans themselves, Pakal died at approximately eighty years old; however, studies show that his body corresponds to that of a man in his forties.

According to descriptions in hieroglyphics and studies that have been made of his remains more than once, Pakal was robust and measured approximately 1.70 meters tall, a description that does not correspond to that of a Mayan octogenarian.

Many experts say that the tombstone on his grave portrays Pakal sitting in a kind of ship, given that his hands and feet seem to be operating some sort of board and pedals.

In addition to what would be the rear, fire can be seen, apparently coming from the propeller of the ship.

This and other evidence found around his tomb have fuelled the legend that Pakal had the means to visit outer space and even travel through time.

His tomb was discovered on June 15, 1952 inside the Temple of the Inscriptions by archaeologist Alberto Ruz Lhuillier and is considered the most important funerary monument in Mesoamerica.



Born on March 23, 603, K'inich Janaab' Pakal was a descendant, on his mother's side, of the dynasty that ruled Palenque.

When his grandfather and his brother died, who governed the region that corresponds to Palenque, a part of the nobility decided to separate and settle in Tortuguero, Tabasco.

Meanwhile, Pakal's parents returned to Palenque to raise him to the throne, because although his mother, Sak K'uk was the legitimate heir, the position could only be occupied by a male.

Pakal became governor of Palenque when he was only twelve years old .

At first, it was thought that the tombstone was just an altar, but when it was removed, the governor's sarcophagus was found. It was then when was discovered that the Mesoamerican pyramids also served as a mausoleum, as the Egyptians used to.



Temple of the Inscriptions

Pakal's time on the throne was one of peace and prosperity. He married at the age of twenty-three Tz'akbu Ajaw, with whom he had five children, of whom two were governors after his father.

During his government, Palenque had confrontations with those who settled in Tortuguero, but never succumbed to them. Furthermore, he took military action against those who invaded his territory, always emerging victorious.



Pakal promoted the productive activity of the region both for trade and for local consumption, in addition to reactivating ceremonies and public events, which earned him the appreciation of the people.

He also promoted the written record of all military actions, ceremonies and important events, which has helped historians and archaeologists of our times to better study and understand the history of Palenque.

Pakal's tombstone measures 3.80m long by 2.20m wide and weighs 7 tons. It shows the governor as the center of the universe, below is the underworld, in the middle the tree of life and above the god Itzamná represented as a quetzal.

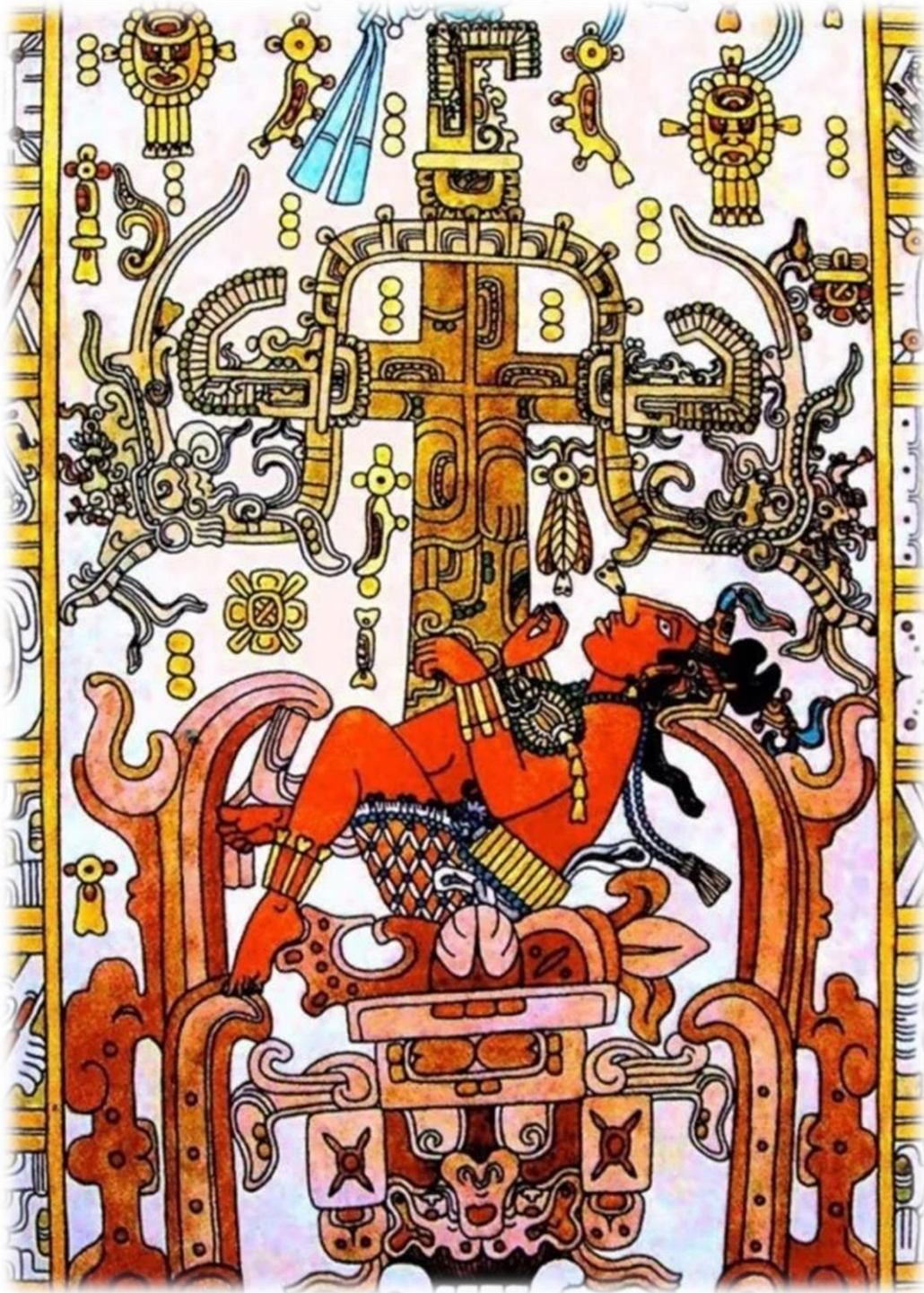
The tombstone that covered Pakal's sarcophagus is the most important record of the discovery, for decades it has been the subject of debate between experts and amateurs who have more than 1 theory about it.

Taking into account what is known about the Mayan culture and the studies that experts have done over the years, the official interpretation of the tombstone is as follows:

Pakal is seated in the middle, as a young man in the center of the universe. Below him is Sak B'aak Naah or the first centipede of white bones, which represents the Mayan underworld: Xibalbá.

From Pakal's body emerges a tree, with a two-headed serpent intersecting, dividing the cosmos into its four regions.

Around the tree it's possible to see the faces of different deities that accompany him on his journey through the cosmos and right at the top of the tree, the god Itzamná can be seen represented as a quetzal.



However, there is another theory that Pakal is actually sitting in what appears to be a spaceship and that his hands are on the control board.

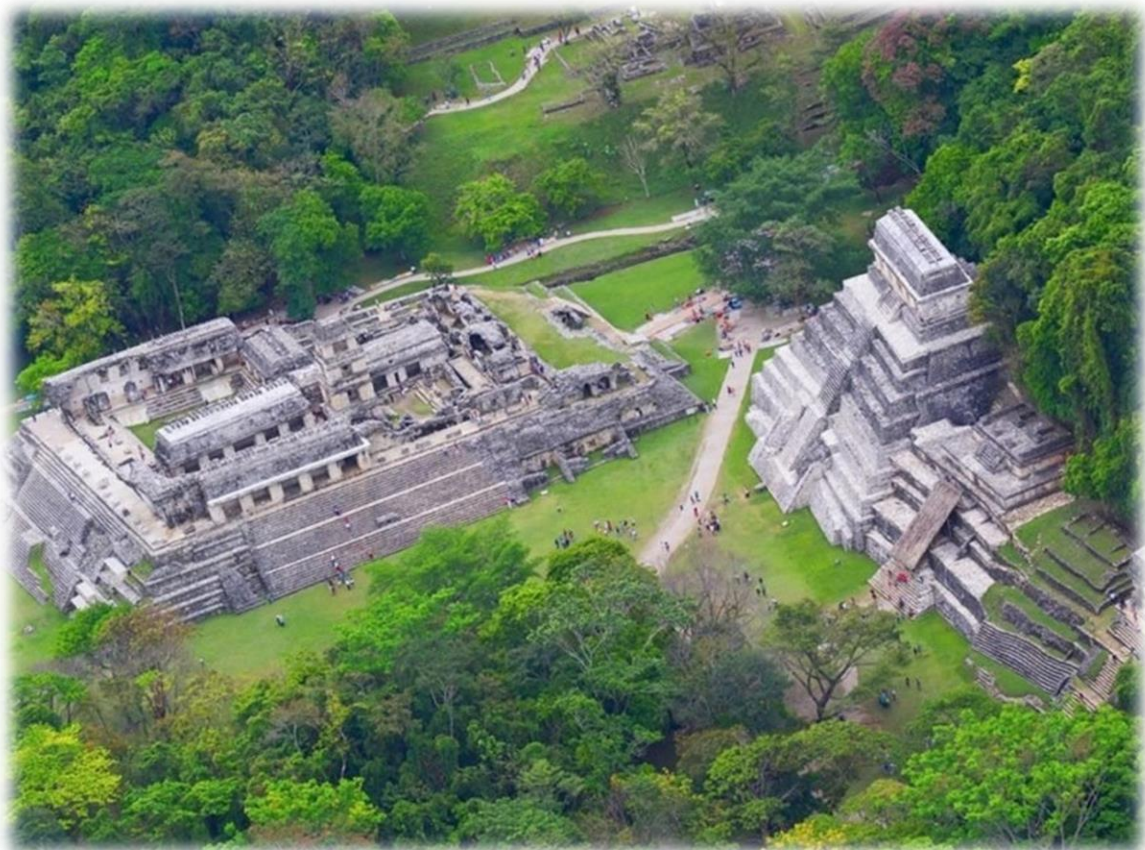
In addition, next to his nose it is possible to see an artifact that is probably a microphone or something that helps him breathe in space.

Beneath it, what would be the head of the centipede is actually a turbine from which fire comes out as it advances and which has the cosmos around it, precisely because it is traveling through space.

Although it is a rather unusual theory, there is not enough evidence to prove it correct or disprove it, but the vast majority of the scientific community has dismissed it as far-fetched.

On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that according to Mayan mythology, the gods came down from the heavens and taught them about mathematics, architecture, agriculture and technology.

Have they taught man to build machines to fly and perhaps travel through space?



Another offbeat theory says that Pakal may have been a time traveller who stayed to live among the Maya.

How is this theory supported? The answer lies in the remains of the Mayan governor.

According to studies that have been made of his remains and descriptions written in stone, Pakal was a robust man who measured 1.70m, an image that does not entirely coincide with the Mayans.

In addition, the Mayans used to adorn their teeth with precious stones and deformed their skulls from babies to give them a more elongated appearance; customs that should be present, especially in royalty, but Pakal does not have any of these characteristics.

Another test is the age at which he is supposed to have died. According to the numbers, Pakal the Great died at about the age of eighty, but his remains are those of a man in his forties.

However, it is known that the Mayans changed some dates to coincide with astronomical or God-related events, and this may have been the case.

Was Pakal a time traveller who used his technology to return to Palenque and ensure the survival of his people?

You have the last word.

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K'INICH JANAAB' PAKAL

https://www.worldhistory.org/Kinich_Janaab_Pacal/

Author

Joshua J. Mark

published on 28 March 2014

Definition

K'inich Janaab' Pakal (23 March 603 CE - 31 March 683 CE) was the **Maya** king of **Palenque** in the modern-day State of Chiapas, Mexico. Also known as Pacal (which means 'shield') and Pacal the Great, he is most famous for raising the **city** of Palenque (known as B'aakal) from relative obscurity to a great power, his building projects in the city (especially the **Temple** of the Inscriptions), and his elaborately carved sarcophagus lid which has been interpreted by some to depict an ancient astronaut riding on a rocket ship. Pacal assumed the throne of Palenque at the age of 12, in 615 CE, and ruled successfully until his **death** at the age of 80. He was married to the Lady Tzakbu Ajaw and had three sons who

succeeded him in rule. The ruins of Palenque visible in the modern day are only a small fraction of the ancient city developed and expanded by Pacal during his reign; the rest of the vast metropolis remains unexcavated in the surrounding jungle. Palenque was a city of modest size when Pacal took the throne, and it was through his efforts that it became one of the great urban centers of Mesoamerica, rivaling even the might and splendor of **Tikal**.

Youth & Ascension to Power

Pacal was the son of Lady Sak K'uk who reigned as Queen of Palenque from 612-615 CE. In 611 CE the reigning king died and the legitimate heir, Pacal, was too young to take the throne. Scholars have deciphered inscriptions that make it clear that Palenque suffered a significant military defeat in 611 CE and then lost their king, Ajen Yohl Mot, the following year; this upset the balance of the city which the next ruler would need to restore. In 612 CE, Janaab Pacal, Suk K'ak's father, took the throne but died that same year. Inscriptions indicate a monarch known as Muwaan Mat assumed rule after Janaab Pacal but, as Muwaan Mat is a supernatural figure symbolizing prosperity, it is thought that this refers to the Lady Sak K'uk who returned balance to Palenque after the upheavals. She ruled for three years until her son reached maturity which, at that time, was the age of 12. The dynasty at Palenque believed that rule descended from an ancestor known as The First Mother and so female rulers, though not common, were not unusual. It was understood, however, that a female monarch would step down as soon as a male heir reached the age of maturity.

Lady Sak K'uk seems to have continued to guide her son once he took the throne, as indicated by inscriptions throughout Palenque, and she did so until her death in 640 CE. Upon taking the throne, Pacal almost instantly began building enormous and elaborately worked monuments in order to celebrate both the city's past and his family's legitimate claim to rule. The Mayanist scholar Gene Stuart writes,

“Pacal emphatically traced his lineage back to a deity as well as to royal humans, and other rulers also found it wise to establish divine ancestors. A Maya ruler served as the human manifestation of gods on earth. As the intermediary between humans and gods, he claimed the power to control the supernatural forces of the universe. In rituals he nurtured and glorified the gods, seeking to maintain the always precarious balance of nature in an agricultural society”.

Since Pacal's father was a lord, but not the king, other noble families in Palenque claimed they had more right to rule than he. In response, both Pacal and his eldest son, Kinich Kan B'alaam II, would make sure to represent the accomplishments and legitimacy of their family in all of the buildings and monuments of Palenque including the **Palace**, the Temples of the Cross, and the Temple of the Inscriptions.

The Temple of the Inscriptions

This focus on recording the history of the city through architecture is especially notable in the famous Temple of the Inscriptions. Construction began in 675 CE and it was purposefully built as the tomb of Pacal. The Temple of the Inscriptions is a pyramid with a small building at the top inscribed with the second longest continuous Mayan text yet uncovered in Mesoamerica (the longest being the Hieroglyphic Staircase at the city of Copan). For a century after Palenque was discovered, the pyramid was thought to be a religious centre in the city (as the inscriptions were undecipherable) until the Mexican Archaeologist Alberto Ruiz recognized that the walls of the small temple continued down below the floor. He discovered that the platform of the floor had drill holes, which had been sealed by stone plugs, and surmised that the Maya had lowered the floor into place with ropes, perhaps, to seal a royal tomb. Between 1948 and 1952 CE, Ruiz worked with his team, excavating the temple and, finally, discovered the tomb of Pacal the Great. He shone his flashlight down into the tomb and, as he writes:

"Out of the dim shadows emerged a vision from a fairy tale, a fantastic, ethereal sight from another world. It seemed a huge magic grotto carved out of ice, the walls sparkling and glistening like snow crystals. Delicate festoons of stalactites hung like tassels of a curtain, and the stalagmites on the floor looked like drippings from a great candle. The impression, in fact, was that of an abandoned chapel. Across the walls marched stucco figures in low relief. Then my eyes sought the floor. This was almost entirely filled with a great carved stone slab, in perfect condition.

The stone slab was the sarcophagus of Pacal which, when removed, revealed the great king wearing a jade mask and adorned as the Maya Maize god in jade jewellery and a beaded net skirt. The historian Clare Gibson comments on this writing,

"The beaded net skirt that Pacal is wearing connects him with the Maize God who may be depicted dressed in it in scenes in which he is shown dancing out of Xibalba [the Mayan underworld]. This type of skirt was usually worn by Maya women, but adorns the Maize God to signify his powers of fertility. Pacal would have expected to have emulated the Maize God in being resurrected following his death.

The tomb contained a great quantity of earrings, wristlets, bracelets, and necklaces, and a jade base relief of high quality. Stuart writes, "The Maya held jade in esteem equal to quetzal plumes [the feathers of the Quetzal bird], in part because they saw in the green of both a symbol of life. The elite wore jade jewellery by the pound in necklaces, ear ornaments, bracelets, and anklets, and on

belts". None of the treasures, however, proved as valuable to Mayanists as the sarcophagus lid itself which depicted the Maya view of the cosmos.



Pakal the Great & Xibalba

Pacal's Sarcophagus & Identity Controversy

The Sarcophagus' lid measures 3.6x2 metres (12x7 feet) and shows a man tilting backwards at the base of a tree, with a bird high at the top, either falling into or springing out of what appears to be a large urn. Glyphs and symbols run around the edges of the lid, all representing important components of Mayan cosmology. Pacal's sarcophagus is what he is best known for in the modern day as ancient alien theorists, following Erich Von Daniken's interpretation in his book *Chariots of the Gods*, claimed the lid depicts a man riding on a rocket ship, smoke issuing from an exhaust pipe behind him, and the glyphs representing outer space. In reality, the relief shows the World Tree, which the Maya believed had its roots in the underworld, trunk on the earthly plane, and branches high in paradise, and Pacal's relationship to it in death. The king is depicted either at the moment of his death falling from the earthly plane down into Xibalba or at the moment of his resurrection from the underworld, climbing up the World Tree toward paradise. The adornments along the edges represent the sky and other glyphs the sun and moon and, still others, past rulers of Palenque and Pacal's place among them. The bird at the top of the tree is the Bird of Heaven (also known as The Celestial Bird or Principal Bird Deity) who represents the realm of the gods in this

piece, and the 'urn' beneath Pacal is the entrance to Xibalba. Once one is acquainted with Maya cosmological concepts, there is nothing mysterious about the lid of Pacal's sarcophagus but, in 1952 CE, scholars knew far less than they do in the modern day, and so the relief was more open to interpretation at the time when Von Daniken wrote his book (in 1968 CE) than it is today. No credible scholar in the modern day accepts the lid as depicting anything having to do with a rocket ship or an astronaut, but some writers still persist in raising debate over the interpretation of the piece.

Controversy also raged over the identity of the skeleton inside the tomb. It was found that the skeleton's teeth were in very good condition and indicated a male of around the age of 40 at the time of death. Since archaeologists knew that Pacal died at the age of 80, once they had dated the monuments and buildings constructed during his reign, the findings of the epigraphers who identified Pacal as the skeleton in the tomb were called into question. David Kelly and Floyd Lounsbury were the first epigraphers to identify the tomb as belonging to Lord Pacal of Palenque, and their work was later continued by Peter Matthews and Linda Schele. Physical anthropologists, for the most part, contended that the tomb had to belong to a younger man, and the epigraphers had made a mistake in identifying it as that of Pacal, while cultural anthropologists stood by the identification and their work. The controversy was finally resolved in 1996 CE when it was agreed that, as a nobleman all his life, Pacal would have enjoyed better food than his subjects and so his teeth would have been in better condition than others. Further, as no one knows what Pacal favored in his diet, he could have eaten softer foods that took little toll on his teeth. The fact that he lived until the age of 80, and still had a full set of teeth, argues for a healthy lifestyle and attention to personal hygiene. Today it is generally acknowledged that the tomb belongs to Pacal and the remains found by Ruiz in 1952 CE are those of the great king of Palenque.

The Decline of Palenque

The city continued to prosper under the rule of Pacal's sons and their heirs but was invaded and sacked by the forces from the city of Tonina in 711 CE. Archaeological evidence from this period shows no new building construction, and inscriptions indicate the king was captured and, perhaps, executed. There seems to have been no monarch in the city for some time after this, but it is recorded that hostilities between Tonina and Palenque continued through c. 750 CE. The cause of the war is unknown. As with other great Maya urban centers, Palenque was abandoned at some point c. 800 CE and the jungle rose up to claim the city. It was already a ruin when the Spanish Conquest began in the 16th century CE and continued to sink into the overgrowth, in spite of expeditions to the site in the 18th century CE, until the work of John Lloyd Stephens and Frederic Catherwood brought the city to the world's attention and preliminary excavations were begun in the late 19th century CE. Today the city of Pacal the Great is the most

extensively studied of all the Maya sites, even Chichen-Itza, because of the grandeur of the architecture and the precision of the inscriptions, which tell the story of its most venerated king and the splendid city he raised to greatness.

About the Author



Joshua J. Mark

Joshua J. Mark is World History Encyclopedia's co-founder and Content Director. He was previously a professor at Marist College (NY) where he taught history, philosophy, literature, and writing. He has travelled extensively and lived in Greece and Germany.

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United Nations

<https://www.un.org/ungifts/content/replica-of-palenque-head>



Replica of Palenque Head

Gift ID:
UNNY187G

This gift of a stone Palenque Head sculpture is a replica of the one discovered during excavations of the city of Palenque and is believed to depict Mayan King Pakal. The original artifact is in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, Mexico.

The great Mayan King K'inich Janaab Pakal I or Lord Pacal (603 – 683 CE) ascended to the throne as a child and ruled for 68 years over the city of Palenque, in what is today southern Mexico. King Pakal initiated a well-documented, ambitious expansion of the city. His most famous architectural project is the Temple of the Inscriptions, where he was laid to rest, whose extraordinary hieroglyphics have been significant to the study of the ancient Mayan culture.

After Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld visited Mexico in 1959 and admired the Palenque Head, a stone replica was made specially for and gifted to SG Hammarskjöld by the National Museum of Anthropology and the Mexican United Nations Committee. It was on display in Hammarskjöld's suite at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City until the formation of his museum, Dag Hammarskjölds Backåkra in Löderup, Sweden.

Later, an additional Palenque was provided to the United Nations for display within the Headquarters' campus.

Donor Region:
Latin America and Caribbean States

Donor:
Mexico

Classification:
Artifacts & Decorative Arts

Materials:
Stone

Medium:
Carved stone

Location (Building):
Conference Building (CB)

Location floor:
1st Floor

Donation Date:
December 31, 1959

Artist or Maker:
Unknown

Dimensions:
15 x 8 ½ x 7 ½ in.

UN Links:
<https://dam.media.un.org/CS.aspx?VP3=DamView&VBID=2AM94SVYONUJ&SMLS=1&RW=1929&RH...>

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Visit these Web Links to view the Videos:

01] Maya Expert Answers Maya Civilization Questions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXJI7i7W4Pc> [26:13]

Dr. Ed Barnhart, an American archaeologist, answers the internet's burning questions about the ancient Maya civilization. Why was the Maya calendar year only 260 days? Who did they sacrifice? Did they build more pyramids than the Egyptians? This Maya expert answers all these questions and much more.

02] Lost World of the Maya (Full Episode) | National Geographic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MFKy7DJScY> [44:25]

The Maya - their soaring pyramids, monumental cities and mythical mastery of astronomy and mathematics have captured our imaginations and spurred generations of explorers into the jungles of Central America on a quest to understand them. Lost World of the Maya surveys their dramatic rise to prominence in the 'pre-classic era' of the Maya as well as new evidence of the collapse of their civilization in the 800-900's AD.

03] The Entire History of the Maya // Ancient America History Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNbuF1NWXKo> [4:25:35]

04] The Maya Civilization

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9VedPNpXXU> [52:34]

05] Ancient Civilizations: The Mysteries of the Maya

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tUq_z31O6E [52:06]

More than 2000 years ago the Maya built gigantic cities in the middle of the jungle of Central America. They were brilliant inventors and set standards in writing, mathematics and astronomy. Their calendar is still considered a mathematical masterpiece today. But why did the Maya suddenly go down? This full history documentary tells the story of this unique advanced civilization.

06] The Mayans - Ruins Among the Trees

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9YwfTerAdA> [1:08:37]

In the tropical forests of Central America, vast stone pyramids slowly crumble beneath the trees.

In this episode, we look at that great romantic mystery: the fall of the Classic Maya Civilization. Find out how this great civilization grew up among environmental conditions that no other civilization has ever contended with, learn about the fatal flaws that lay beneath its surface, and what happened after its final, cataclysmic collapse.

07] Ancient Apocalypse: Rise and Fall of the Maya Civilization

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaAPwBe3T58> [50:14]

Dive into the world of the Maya civilization, thriving between 250-900 CE. Marvel at their cities and advances in various sciences, juxtaposed with dark rituals and warfare. By 900 CE, these cities were abandoned. Discover with archaeologists what led to the Maya's mysterious decline in Central America's jungles.

08] Lecture: "The Mysteries of the Ancient Maya Civilization and the Apogee of Art in the Americas"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfvS8ENVyJ0> [1:21:53]

Presented by Dr. Arthur Demarest, Vanderbilt University Ingram Professor, Anthropology; director, Vanderbilt Institute of Mesoamerican Archaeology (VIMA); general editor, VIMA Monographs in Archaeology

Dr. Arthur Demarest, an anthropologist and archaeologist, is considered one of the world's leading experts on Olmec and Maya cultures that are represented in the exhibition Exploring Art of the Ancient Americas: The John Bourne Collection. Demarest's work is reshaping ideas about the ancient, advanced, but long-lost Maya society. He is a Department of Anthropology project director in Central America and has spent much of that time excavating the ancient Maya port city of Cancuén. Join Professor Demarest as he discusses his interests in Pre-Columbian religion and ritual and the collapse of civilizations.

This program is presented in partnership with the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at Vanderbilt University.

Maya civilization

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_civilization

Maya civilization



Mayan city-states that have existed in [Central America](#)

Religion

[Maya religion](#)

Geographical range

[Maya Region](#), [Mesoamerica](#)

Period

[Mesoamerican Preclassic Period](#) to [Colonial Period](#)

Dates

c. 2000 BC–1697 AD

Type site	Uaxactun , Dzibilchaltun
Preceded by	Archaic Period
Cause of collapse	Spanish conquest of the Maya

The **Maya civilization** (/ˈmaɪə/) was a [Mesoamerican](#) civilization that existed from [antiquity](#) to the [early modern period](#). It is known by [its ancient temples](#) and [glyphs](#) (script). The [Maya script](#) is the most sophisticated and highly developed [writing system](#) in the [pre-Columbian Americas](#). The civilization is also noted for [its art](#), [architecture](#), [mathematics](#), [calendar](#), and [astronomical system](#).

The Maya civilization developed in the [Maya Region](#), an area that today comprises southeastern [Mexico](#), all of [Guatemala](#) and [Belize](#), and the western portions of [Honduras](#) and [El Salvador](#). It includes the [northern lowlands](#) of the [Yucatán Peninsula](#) and the [Guatemalan Highlands](#) of the [Sierra Madre](#), the Mexican state of [Chiapas](#), southern [Guatemala](#), El Salvador, and the southern lowlands of the Pacific littoral plain. Today, their descendants, known collectively as the Maya, number well over 6 million individuals, speak more than twenty-eight surviving [Mayan languages](#), and reside in nearly the same area as their ancestors.

The [Archaic period](#), before 2000 BC, saw the first developments in agriculture and the earliest villages. The Preclassic period (c. 2000 BC to 250 AD) saw the establishment of the first complex societies in the Maya region, and the cultivation of the staple crops of the [Maya diet](#), including [maize](#), [beans](#), [squashes](#), and [chili peppers](#). The first [Maya cities](#) developed around 750 BC, and by 500 BC these cities possessed monumental architecture, including large temples with elaborate [stucco](#) façades. Hieroglyphic writing was being used in the Maya region by the 3rd century BC. In the Late Preclassic, a number of large cities developed in the [Petén Basin](#), and the city of [Kaminaljuyu](#) rose to prominence in the [Guatemalan Highlands](#). Beginning around 250 AD, the Classic period is largely defined as when the Maya were raising sculpted monuments with [Long Count dates](#). This period saw the Maya civilization develop many [city-states](#) linked by a complex [trade network](#). In the Maya Lowlands two great rivals, the cities of [Tikal](#) and [Calakmul](#), became powerful. The Classic period also saw the intrusive intervention of the central Mexican city of [Teotihuacan](#) in Maya dynastic politics. In the 9th century, there was a widespread [political collapse](#) in the central Maya region, resulting in [civil wars](#), the abandonment of cities, and a northward shift of population. The Postclassic period saw the rise of [Chichen Itza](#) in the north, and the expansion of the aggressive [K'iche' kingdom](#) in the Guatemalan Highlands. In the 16th century, the [Spanish Empire](#) colonised the Mesoamerican region, and a lengthy series of campaigns saw the fall of [Nojpetén](#), the last Maya city, in 1697.

Rule during the Classic period centred on the concept of the "divine king", who was thought to act as a mediator between mortals and the supernatural realm. Kingship was usually (but not exclusively)^[1] [patrilineal](#), and power normally [passed to the eldest son](#). A prospective king was expected to be a successful war leader as well as a ruler. Closed patronage systems were the dominant force in Maya politics, although how patronage affected the political makeup of a kingdom varied from city-state to city-state. By the Late Classic period, the aristocracy had grown in size, reducing the previously exclusive power of the king. The Maya developed sophisticated art forms using both perishable and non-perishable materials, including [wood](#), [jade](#), [obsidian](#), [ceramics](#), sculpted stone monuments, stucco, and finely painted murals.

Maya cities tended to expand organically. The city centers comprised ceremonial and administrative complexes, surrounded by an irregularly shaped sprawl of residential districts. Different parts of a city were often linked by [causeways](#). Architecturally, city buildings included [palaces](#), [pyramid-temples](#), [ceremonial ballcourts](#), and structures specially aligned for astronomical observation. The Maya elite were literate, and developed a complex system of hieroglyphic writing. Theirs was the most advanced writing system in the pre-Columbian Americas. The Maya recorded their history and ritual knowledge in [screenfold books](#), of which only three uncontested examples remain, the rest having been destroyed by the Spanish. In addition, a great many examples of Maya texts can be found on [stelae](#) and ceramics. The Maya developed a highly complex series of interlocking ritual calendars, and employed mathematics that included one of the earliest known instances of the explicit [zero](#) in human history. As a part of their religion, the Maya practised [human sacrifice](#).

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Maya Religion

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_religion

<p><u>Maya mythology</u> and religion</p>	
 <p>Maize god and Itzamna</p>	
<p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloodletting • Death rituals • Dedication rituals • Pilgrimage • Priesthood • Sacrifice (Humans) 	
<p>Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cave sites • Middleworld • Xibalba 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acat • Ah Peku • Ah-Muzen-Cab <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awilix • Bacab • Cabaguil • Camazotz • Chaac

- [Chin](#)
- [Cizin](#)
- [Chirakan-Ixmucane](#)
 - [Ek Chuaj](#)
 - [Goddess I](#)
 - [God L](#)
 - [Hero Twins](#)
- [Howler monkey gods](#)
 - [Huay Chivo](#)
- [Hun Hunahpu](#)
 - [Huracan](#)
 - [Itzamna](#)
 - [Ixchel](#)
 - [Ixpiyacoc](#)
 - [Ixtab](#)
 - [K'awiil](#)
- [Kinich Ahau](#)
- [Kukulkan](#)
- [Maize god](#)
- [Maximón](#)
- [Moon goddess](#)
 - [Naqual](#)
 - [Tzacol](#)
- [Q'uc'umatz](#)
- [Vision Serpent](#)
 - [Voltan](#)
- [Vucub Caquix](#)
 - [Wayob](#)
 - [Xbaquiyalo](#)
- [Xmucane and Xpiacoc](#)
 - [Xmulzencab](#)
 - [Xquic](#)
 - [Xtabay](#)
 - [Yopaat](#)
 - [Yum Kaax](#)
 - [Zipacna](#)

Texts

- [Annals of the Cakchiquels](#)
 - [Popol Vuh](#)
- [Ritual of the Bacabs](#)
 - [Título C'oyoi](#)
- [Título de Totonicapán](#)

The traditional **Maya** or **Mayan** religion of the extant **Maya** peoples of Guatemala, Belize, western Honduras, and the Tabasco, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, Campeche and Yucatán states of Mexico is part of the wider frame of Mesoamerican religion. As is the case with many other contemporary Mesoamerican religions, it results from centuries of symbiosis with Roman Catholicism. When its pre-Hispanic antecedents are taken into account, however, traditional Maya religion has already existed for more than two and a half millennia as a recognizably distinct phenomenon. Before the advent of Christianity, it was spread over many indigenous kingdoms, all with their own local traditions. Today, it coexists and interacts with pan-Mayan syncretism, the 're-invention of tradition' by the Pan-Maya movement, and Christianity in its various denominations.

Sources of traditional Mayan religion

The most important source on traditional Maya religion is the Mayas themselves: the incumbents of positions within the religious hierarchy, diviners, and tellers of tales.

More generally, all those persons who shared their knowledge with outsiders in the past, as well as anthropologists and historians who studied them and continue to do so.

What is known of pre-Hispanic Maya religion stems from heterogeneous sources (the primary ones being of Maya origin):

- Primary sources from pre-Hispanic times: the three surviving Maya hieroglyphic books (the [Maya codices](#) of Dresden, Madrid and Paris) plus the Maya-Toltec Grolier Codex, all dating from the Postclassic period (after 900 AD); the 'ceramic codex' (the corpus of pottery scenes and texts) and mural paintings; the inscriptions in stone from the Classic (200–900 AD) and Late Preclassic (200 BC–200 AD) periods
- Primary sources from the early-colonial (16th-century) period, such as the *Popol Vuh*, the *Ritual of the Bacabs*, and (at least in part) the various *Chilam Balam* books
- Secondary sources, chiefly Spanish treatises from the colonial period, such as those of [Landa](#) for the Lowland Mayas and [Las Casas](#) for the Highland Mayas, but also lexicons such as the early-colonial Motul (Yucatec) and Coto (Kaqchikel) dictionaries
- Archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic studies
- Anthropological reports published since the late 19th century, used in combination with the sources above

Fundamentals of ritual

Traditional Maya religion, though also representing a belief system, is often referred to as *costumbre*, the 'custom' or habitual religious practice, in contradistinction to orthodox Roman Catholic ritual. To a large extent, Maya religion is indeed a complex of ritual practices; and it is, therefore, fitting that the indigenous Yucatec village priest is simply called *jmen* ("practitioner"). Among the main concepts relating to Maya ritual are the following ones.

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Maya mythology

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_mythology

Maya mythology or **Mayan mythology** is part of [Mesoamerican mythology](#) and comprises all of the [Maya](#) tales in which personified forces of nature, [deities](#), and the heroes interacting with these play the main roles. The legends of the era have to be reconstructed from [iconography](#). Other parts of Mayan oral tradition (such as animal tales, folk tales, and many moralising stories) are not considered here.

Important Early-Colonial and recent narrative themes

In Maya narrative, the origin of many natural and cultural phenomena is set out, often with the moral aim of defining the ritual relationship between humankind and its environment. In such a way, one finds explanations about the origin of the heavenly bodies (Sun and Moon, but also Venus, the [Pleiades](#), the Milky Way); the mountain landscape; clouds, rain, thunder and lightning; wild and tame animals; the colors of the maize; diseases and their curative herbs; agricultural instruments; the steam bath, etc. The following more encompassing themes can be discerned.

Cosmogony

The [Popol Vuh](#) describes the creation of the earth by a group of creator deities, as well as its sequel. The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel relates the collapse of the sky and the deluge, followed by the slaying of the earth crocodile, the raising of the sky and the erection of the five World Trees.^[1] The Lacandons also knew the tale of the creation of the Underworld.^[2]

Creation of Humankind

The *Popol Vuh* gives a sequence of four efforts at creation: First were animals, then wet clay, wood, and then last, the creation of the first ancestors from [maize](#) dough. To this, the Lacandons add the creation of the main kin groupings and their '[totemic](#)' animals. A Verapaz myth preserved by Las Casas in his 'Apologética Historia Sumaria' assigns the creation of humankind to artisan gods similar to the *Popol Vuh* monkey brothers. The creation of humanity is concluded by the Mesoamerican tale of the opening of the Maize (or Sustenance) Mountain by the Lightning deities.

Actions of the Heroes: Arranging the World

The best-known hero myth, included in the *Popol Vuh*, is about the defeat of a bird demon and of the deities of disease and death by the [Hero Twins](#), Hunahpu and Xbalanque. Of considerable interest is also the parallel narrative of a [maize hero](#) defeating the deities of Thunder and Lightning and establishing a pact with them. Although its present spread is confined to the Gulf Coast areas, various data suggest that this myth was once a part of Mayan oral tradition as well. Important mythological fragments about the heroic reduction of the jaguars and the acquisition of jaguar power have been preserved by the Tzotzil and Chol Maya.

Marriage with the Earth

This mythological type defines the relationship between humankind and the game and crops. An ancestral hero - Xbalanque in a Kekchi tradition - changes into a hummingbird to woo the daughter of an Earth God while she is weaving, or to abduct her; the hero's wife is finally transformed into the game, bees, snakes and insects, or the maize. If the hero gets the upper hand, he becomes the Sun, his wife the Moon. A moralistic Tzotzil version has a man rewarded with a daughter of the Rain Deity, only to get divorced and lose her again.

Origin of Sun and Moon

The origin of Sun and Moon is not always the outcome of a Marriage with the Earth. From Chiapas and the western Guatemalan Highlands comes the tale of Younger Brother and his jealous Elder Brethren: Youngest One becomes the Sun, his mother becomes the Moon, and the Elder Brethren are transformed into wild pigs and other forest animals. In a comparable way, the Elder Brethren of the *Popol Vuh* Twin myth are transformed into monkeys, with their younger brothers becoming Sun and Moon. To the west of the Maya area, the transformation of two brothers into sun and moon is the main subject of many tales.



Human Sacrifice in Maya Culture

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_sacrifice_in_Maya_culture



Sculpture in the Great Ballcourt at Chichen Itza depicting sacrifice by decapitation. The figure at left holds the severed head of the figure at right, who spouts blood in the form of serpents from his neck.

During the [pre-Columbian era](#), **human sacrifice in Maya culture** was the ritual offering of nourishment to the [gods and goddesses](#). Blood was viewed as a potent source of nourishment for the Maya deities, and the [sacrifice](#) of a living creature was a powerful [blood offering](#). By extension, the sacrifice of human life was the ultimate offering of blood to the gods, and the most important Maya rituals culminated in [human sacrifice](#). Generally, only high-status prisoners of [war](#) were sacrificed, and lower status captives were used for labor.

Human sacrifice among the [Maya](#) is evident from at least the [Classic period](#) (c. AD 250–900) right through to the final stages of the [Spanish conquest](#) in the 17th century. Human sacrifice is depicted in Classic [Maya art](#), is mentioned in Classic period [glyph texts](#) and has been verified archaeologically by analysis of skeletal remains from the Classic and [Postclassic](#) (c. AD 900–1524) periods. Additionally, human sacrifice is described in a number of late Maya and early Spanish colonial texts, including the [Madrid Codex](#), the K'iche' epic [Popol Vuh](#), the K'iche' [Título de Totonicapán](#), the K'iche' language [Rabinal Achi](#), the [Annals of the Kaqchikels](#), the [Yucatec Songs of Dzitbalche](#) and [Diego de Landa's Relación de las cosas de Yucatán](#).

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Maya

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-americas/maya>

The Mayan Empire, centered in the tropical lowlands of what is now Guatemala, reached the peak of its power and influence around the sixth century A.D. The Maya excelled at agriculture, pottery, writing, calendars and mathematics, and left behind an astonishing amount of impressive architecture and symbolic artwork. Most of the great stone cities of the Maya were abandoned by A.D. 900, however, and since the 19th century scholars have debated what might have caused this dramatic decline.

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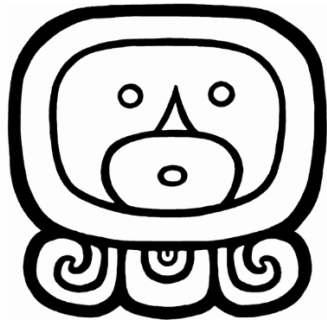
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Maya Civilization

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Maya Archaeologist

Nearly 80 years ago since the discovery of

King Pakal's Tomb

<https://www.mayaarchaeologist.co.uk/80-years-ago-since-the-discovery-of-king-pakals-tomb/>

Nearly 80 years ago, the Mexican archaeologist, Alberto Ruz Lhuillier, discovered the magnificent tomb of King Pakal from the city of Palenque.

K'inich Janaab' Pakal 1, also known as Pakal the Great, Sun Shield, became king when he was only 12 years old in AD 603 and died in AD 683 after ruling for 68 years.

Fig.1

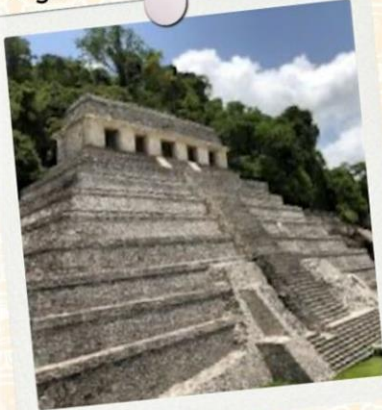
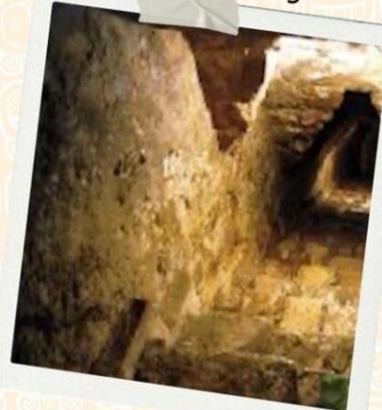


Fig.2



ALBERTO RUZ LHUILLIER'S DISCOVERY OF KING PAKAL'S TOMB

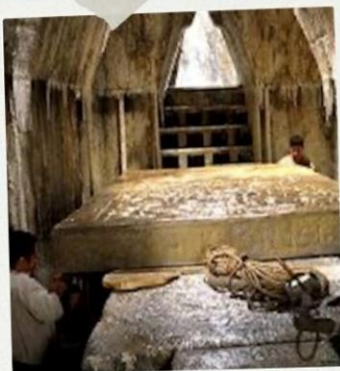


Fig.3

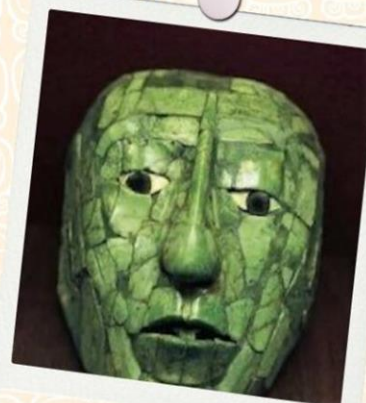


Figure 1

Alberto Ruz started investigating the Temple of Inscriptions at Palenque in 1949 under INAH's (National Institute of Anthropology and History) programme at Palenque.

Figure 2

When clearing the floor of the structure on top he noted that there was a break in the floor likely made by looters and next to it a stone slab that had drilled holes filled with carved plugs (like nails). Looking through that break he saw two stone steps leading downwards.

The stairs were filled with rubble, so in 1949 Ruz and his team started clearing this away, at the same time making meticulous notes, measurements, drawings and photos. The process was long and arduous due to the difficulty in removing the stone rubble on a narrow and dimly lit staircase. There was some excitement when they thought they had reached the bottom, only to find that the staircase had not ended but rather turned 180 degrees continuing downwards - they were only halfway!

Figure 3

On 15th June 1952 Alberto Ruz and his team finally reached the bottom, 22m below and found themselves in an empty chamber. Removing a huge stone in the north wall revealed a room beyond with what they thought was a large altar in the middle - a large slab of limestone with drawings and glyphs, measuring 3.72 m in height and 2.17 m in width, set on a stone base.

It wasn't until later in November of that same year when Ruz drilled a small hole into the altar to see if it was hollow and found that it was! The five-tone slab was then lifted to reveal an inner lid set into the stone, and when this was removed, Ruz and his colleagues gazed on the remains of the great king, covered with jade beads, a jade death mask and other objects.

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History of Maya Civilization

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Maya_civilization



- [People](#)
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History

- [Preclassic Maya](#)
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The **history of Maya civilization** is divided into three principal periods: the Preclassic, Classic and Postclassic periods; these were preceded by the Archaic Period, which saw the first settled villages and early developments in agriculture. Modern scholars regard these periods as arbitrary divisions of chronology of the [Maya civilization](#), rather than indicative of cultural evolution or decadence. Definitions of the start and end dates of period spans can vary by as much as a century, depending on the author. The Preclassic lasted from approximately 3000 BC to approximately 250 AD; this was followed

by the Classic, from 250 AD to roughly 950 AD, then by the Postclassic, from 950 AD to the middle of the 16th century. Each period is further subdivided:

Period	Division		Dates
Archaic			8000-2000 BC
Preclassic	Early Preclassic		2000-1000 BC
	Middle Preclassic	Early Middle Preclassic	1000-600 BC
		Late Middle Preclassic	600-350 BC
	Late Preclassic	Early Late Preclassic	350-1 BC
		Late Late Preclassic	1 BC - AD 159
		Terminal Preclassic	AD 159-250
Classic	Early Classic		AD 250-550
	Late Classic		AD 550-830
	Terminal Classic		AD 830-950
Postclassic	Early Postclassic		AD 950-1200
	Late Postclassic		AD 1200-1539
Contact period			AD 1511-1697



Structure 5 at Takalik Abaj was built during the Middle Preclassic.^[8]



Kaminaljuyu, in the highlands, and El Mirador, in the lowlands, were both important cities in the Late Preclassic



Calakmul was one of the most important Classic period cities



Zaculeu was capital of the Postclassic Mam kingdom in the Guatemalan Highlands^[76]



Mayapan was an important Postclassic city in the northern Yucatán Peninsula



Drawing by Frederick Catherwood of the Nunnery complex at Uxmal



Page from the Lienzo de Tlaxcala showing the Spanish conquest of Iximche, known as Cuahtemallan in the Nahuatl language

Women in Maya Society

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Maya_society

Ancient [Maya](#) women had an important role in [society](#): beyond propagating the [culture](#) through bearing and raising children, Maya women participated in economic, governmental, and farming activities. The lives of women in ancient [Mesoamerica](#) are not well documented: "Of the three elite founding area tombs discovered to date within the [Copan Acropolis](#), two contain the remains of women, and yet there is not a single reference to a woman in either known contemporary texts or later retrospective accounts of Early Classic events and personages at Copan," writes a scholar.

Women play a significant role in rituals, cooking food for consumption and sacrifice. Whether women participated in said rituals is unknown. Women also worked on all of the [textiles](#), an essential resource, and product for Maya society.

The status of women in Maya society can be inferred from their burials and textual and monumental history. Maya societies include [Toniná](#), a city that developed a [matrilineal](#) system of hereditary descent after the reign and death of the powerful leader, Lady K'awil. She had assumed the mantle of power after the failure of the two male leaders. Lady K'awil's reign is documented in murals that depict her seated on a [throne](#) with captives at her feet.

Food

[Maya cuisine](#) has been well documented. Techniques implemented by [pre-Columbian](#) Mayan societies include large-scale agricultural production, hunting, and foraging. The [milpa](#) growing system provided the essential staples of the Mayan diet: corn, beans, and squash. They also have a small variety of rice called [quinoa](#).

Art

The leading role of [the Moon goddess](#) may be interpreted through her depiction in the [codices](#) and ancient murals. Another often depicted goddess is [Ixchel](#). [Textiles](#) were a central aspect of ancient Mayan life, and while it is not known whether all women produced textiles, those that were produced were created by women. Women used different objects in the spinning and weaving processes depending on their [social class](#). [Noble women](#) could use [dye](#) in textiles. Craft and fiber evidence from the city of Ceren, which was buried by [volcanic ash](#) in 600 C.E., indicates that by that time, women's textile work was considered art, not simply crafts woven for a specific household purpose. The creation of the works of art suggests there was a market for them. Women held power in their ability to work thread and to create something that represented value.

Women's role in rituals

The social, and political rank of ancient Maya women is increasingly debated in [archeological](#) studies into the role of gender. To date, lines of evidence are based chiefly on an investigation of [material culture](#) (e.g. monumental sculpture and iconography, ceramic art), use of space (residential architecture and activity analysis, and, to a lesser extent, mortuary data). The principle of [complementarity](#), i.e. that men and women played separate, but equally important, roles in society, is found in many studies that define an ideological basis for various expressions of female power, including male/female pairings and gender combination. For example, in the [iconography](#) of the Classic period public monuments which represent elites it could be argued that although women are seen as parts of male history in the texts of monuments depicting the lives of rulers, the images on the same monuments do not dwell on sexual characteristics. Males and females are identifiable only by their clothing and decoration, which shows a 'unified elite identity', in which male/female pairs are dichotomous. [Grave goods](#), inscriptions, and texts also provide evidence of complementarity via the authority elite women gave to ruling lineages often through marriage alliances outside their natal homelands.

Food in the culture also serves as a determinant of status and as a metaphor. The processes of producing, distributing, and consuming food, as in all cultures, reflect their prevailing norms. In this instance, it can be inferred as a source of power for ancient Mayan women. Although it is believed that elite women-controlled food used in rituals, analysis of diet from a variety of sites at different periods indicates that women ate less valued food than their male counterparts. By contrast, non-elite women appear to have shared the same food with men. This finding may suggest that: women did not participate in ritual consumption of food in the same way or to the same extent that men did; or that food consumption was associated with gender identity. Preferential access to ritual food by males ceases after the Spanish conquest but males continued to have more carnivorous diets. This phenomenon could be caused by the conversion of public rituals to private or the assimilation of Spanish gender values, or the underlying ideology that is maintained in gender dietary differences. Virtually all rituals involved feasting and women were in charge of the preparation of food and drink used as offerings and for consumption, as well as providing offerings of cloth (see below). Feasts and rituals were visible and significant means used by competing Maya elites to demonstrate their status. Whether or not women were active participants does not belie the social, symbolic, and political meaning of their contribution

In addition to the ideological basis for high female status, women exercised agency through their labor during the historic period. The labor of women was very important, both socially and economically but their participation in public rituals was limited; because of the potential ethnocentric and geographic bias. There may have been temporal and/or regional differences in the degree of female participation in ritual.

Gender roles

Men and women performed differing tasks: "Males produce[d] food by agricultural labor, and helped women make babies but females process[ed] the products of [the field](#) to make them edible." In addition to raising deer when necessary, women had religious responsibilities related to household rituals. Women held important daily roles in this aspect of life. While young boys were being taught hunting skills, "the girl was trained in the household, and she was taught how to keep the domestic religious [shrines](#)."

Women were associated with the ritual practice of [religion](#), as well as the beliefs themselves. The [Moon Goddess](#) is one of the most [prominent gods](#) in [the Maya pantheon](#). Through her relations with the other gods, she produced the Maya population. [The local rulers](#) claimed descent from the Moon Goddess.



A Maya souvenir maker

[Gender](#) in ancient Maya art is ambiguous. In some images of their [heir](#) recognition, this duality is explicit: there is a male figure on one side of the newly anointed, and a [female figure](#) on the other side.

Textiles

The prevalence of females in rituals reflects the importance of women to the Maya social structure during the Classic period (AD 250– AD 900). Women were the primary weavers of textiles, which formed a major part of any ancient Mesoamerican economy. Based on ethnohistory and iconography, the Maya were huge producers of material for both internal and external use. However, the archaeological classification of textile production is complicated in any tropical region because of issues of conservation.

Evidence for textile production at Caracol, Belize

The evidence for the production and distribution of cloth that is found in the pre-Columbian Maya area and a large contributing site of archaeological data relative to textiles from the ancient Maya is in the city of [Caracol](#), Belize. Archaeology at Caracol has been carried out annually from 1985 to the present and has resulted in the collection of data that permits insight into the economic production and social distribution of cloth at the site. This is accomplished by examining the contexts and distributions of spindle whorls, bone needles, bone pins and hairpins, bone awls, and limestone bars. All of these artifacts can be related to weaving, netting, or cloth in some way.

[Spindle whorls](#) are the artifacts most clearly associated with textile production. At least 57 have been recovered at Caracol, 38 of them in 20 different burials. Several of these interments are of high-status women placed in the most important architectural constructions at the site. The contextual placement of these burials stresses not only the link between women and weaving but also the high status associated with such activity, thus signaling the importance of cloth and spinning in ancient Maya society.^[7]

Child bearing

Bearing and rearing children was an integral part of society. The [mythology](#) and power associated with the ability to create life was one which men tried to emulate. Men participated in [bloodletting](#) their genitals to create something new from their [blood](#). Instead of giving birth to live, they would give birth to new eras through the symbolic gesture of [menstruation](#). This act was highly ritualized; the objects used to pierce the skin were "[stingray](#) spines, [obsidian](#) blades, or other sharp instruments." The blood was allowed to drip on cloth, which was burned as part of the ritual.

A medical study found that Mexican Mayan women have the lowest symptoms of menopause reported along with Greek peasant women.

A medical study found that Mayan girls entered into menarche at around 15.1 years old.

Intermarriage

In East Central [Quintana Roo](#) some of the Mayans are descended from the intermarriage between Mayan women and Chinese migrants. These descendents are discriminated against by some native people, although they are accepted in general. Mestizos and Mayans married Chinese without restraint.

[Chinese men](#) arrived in [British Honduras](#) (now [Belize](#)) as [indentured workers](#), but many escaped upon arrival, running away to Santa Cruz. They married Mayan women and had children.

African, East Indian, European, and Chinese men all intermarried with native Maya Indian women in British Honduras.

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MAYA SOCIETY

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_society

Maya society concerns the social organization of the [Pre-Hispanic Maya](#), its political structures, and social classes. The Maya people were indigenous to [Mexico](#) and [Central America](#) and the most dominant people groups of Central America up until the 6th century.

In the Neolithic Age, Maya society has contributed to the fields of astronomy, mathematics, agriculture, art and writing. The Mayans would peak as a civilization between 250 - 900 AD. This included complex cities, social life, and politics. Mayan civilization began to decline after this time period, and remaining Mayans would revert to more of a hunter-gatherer society. These remaining tribes would eventually be conquered by Europeans in the 1500s.

The Maya lived in [Mesoamerica](#), concentrated in the [Yucatán Peninsula](#), the Peten district of northern [Guatemala](#) and southern Mexico. The Maya reached the height of their civilization during the Classic Period of [Maya civilization](#) (A.D 250 to 900) before a decline starting about 900 AD. The Maya Civilization, centered in these tropical lands, reached their peak of power and influence around the sixth century.

The Maya practiced [body modification](#), including cranium modification, dental modification, skin modification and piercings. The Maya valued individualism through body modification. Body modification sometimes reflected one's political status, a cultural belief that body modification may ward them from evil spirits, impersonating important cultural figures and to signify important events that have happened through one's life.

The Maya were known to engage in warfare to procure nearby resources, assert political control over neighbors, procure slave labor and sacrificial victims for rituals. Warfare in Maya society was frequent.

Kingdom, court, and royalty

A [Classic period](#) Maya [polity](#) was a small kingdom (*ajawil*, *ajawlel*, *ajawlii*) headed by a hereditary ruler – [ajaw](#), later *k'uhul ajaw*. Both terms appear in early Colonial texts including *Papeles de Paxbolón* where they are used as [synonyms](#) for [Aztec](#) and [Spanish](#) terms for rulers and their domains. These are *tlatoani* and *tlahucayotl* in [Nahuatl](#), and the Spanish words *rey*, *majestad*, and *reino* and *señor* for ruler/leader/[lord](#) and *señorío* or *dominio* of realm. Such kingdoms were usually no more than a [capital](#) city with its neighborhood and several dependent towns (similar to a [city-state](#)). There were also larger polities that controlled larger territories and subjugated smaller polities; the extensive systems controlled by [Tikal](#) and [Caracol](#) serve as examples of these.

Each kingdom had its name that did not necessarily correspond to any locality within its territory. Its identity was that of a political unit associated with a particular ruling [dynasty](#). For instance, the archaeological site of [Naranjo](#) was the capital of the kingdom of Saal. The land (*chan ch'é'n*) of the kingdom and its capital were called *Wakab'nal* or *Maxam* and were part of a larger geographical entity known as *Huk Tsuk*. Despite constant warfare and eventual shifts in regional power, most kingdoms never disappeared from the political landscape until the collapse of the whole system in the 9th century. In this respect, Classic Maya kingdoms were similar to late [Postclassic](#) polities encountered by the Spanish in Yucatán and Central [Mexico](#): some polities were subordinate to hegemonic centers or rulers through conquest and/or dynastic unions and yet even then they persisted as distinct entities.



Presentation of captives to a Maya ruler

[Mayanists](#) have been increasingly accepting the "court paradigm" of Classic Maya societies that puts the emphasis on the centrality of the royal household and especially the person of the king. This approach focuses on the totality of Maya monumental spaces as the embodiment of the diverse activities of the royal household. It considers the role of places and spaces (including dwellings of royalty and nobles, throne rooms, temples, halls and plazas for public ceremonies) in establishing and negotiating power and social [hierarchy](#), but also in producing and projecting aesthetic and moral values that define the order of a wider social realm. It focuses on the possessions and embodiment of which objects held in their society.

Spanish sources invariably describe even the largest Maya settlements of [Yucatán](#) and [Guatemala](#) as dispersed agglomerations of dwellings grouped around the temples and palaces of the ruling dynasty and lesser nobles. Though there was

economic specialization among Classic period Maya centers (see [Chunchucmil](#), for example), it was not conducted at a scale similar to that of the [Aztec](#) capital of [Tenochtitlan](#). Some argue that Maya cities were not [urban](#) centers^[2] but were, instead, structured according to and conceptualized as enormous royal households, the locales of the administrative and ritual activities of the royal court. Within the theoretical framework of this model, they were the places where privileged nobles could approach the holy ruler, where aesthetical values of the high culture were formulated and disseminated, and where aesthetic items were consumed. They were the self-proclaimed centers and the sources of social, moral, and cosmic, order. The fall of a royal court as in the well-documented cases of [Piedras Negras](#) or [Copán](#) would cause the inevitable 'death' of the associated settlement.

The noble class was even more than complex and specialized in the climate of Maya society. Noble status and the occupation were only served and passed on through elite family lineages. Thus, revealing that the Maya Civilization was set and it was very difficult to move upwards within the society. Occupations for Maya men was limited to their father's occupation. Thus, if your father was a farmer, then you were a farmer. The upper caste was composed of rulers, nobles and priests. The middle caste were businessmen, merchants and soldiers.

Kinship

Ancient Maya kinship and descent have alternatively been described as [patrilineal](#), [matrilineal](#), and bilateral. Maya political organization has been characterized as both segmentary (involving well-defined lineages and clan-like structures) and centralized.

Scribes

Scribes held a prominent position in Maya courts and had their own patron deities (see [Howler monkey gods](#) and [Maya maize god](#)). They often came from aristocratic families and likely were organized hierarchically. It appears that some scribes were attached to the royal house, while others were serving at temples and were, perhaps, counted among the priests. Maya art often depicts rulers with trappings indicating they were scribes or at least able to write, such as having pen bundles in their headdresses. Additionally, many rulers have been found in conjunction with writing tools such as shell or clay ink pots.

Body modifications

To the ancient Maya, body modification was a reflection of a cultural, and individual identity. Through different modifications, the body could be experienced individually, used as a symbol, or as a political statement. Beauty was also used to outwardly show and perform social and moral values.

Physical remains of the Maya help piece together the motivation and significance for enduring vast amounts of pain, and using great amounts of their wealth to make themselves beautiful. Ancient Maya placed a high value on certain extreme [body modifications](#), often undergoing tedious and painful procedures as a [rite of passage](#), an homage to their gods, and as a permanently visible [status symbol](#) of their place in society that would last a lifetime, and into their [afterlife](#). Therefore, there was aesthetic, religious, and social reasoning behind the modification.

Cranium modification

The origin of [cranial modification](#) among the Maya is unknown, but it possibly was inherited from the [Olmecs](#), predecessors of the Maya, who were located near the Tuxtla Mountains. Cranial modification was one of the most important practices of the Olmec culture. Individuals enduring cranial modification could be of any status, but many more elite individuals were depicted with cranial modifications. Intentional deformation practices were used as a way to differentiate between members of the society. All members of an elite family were expected to go through cranial modification, starting shortly after birth. The procedure occurred while the skull of the child was not fully grown and still soft, making it easily shaped.

Evidence

Most evidence of cranial deformation is found through [osteological](#) remains discovered through archaeological excavation of Maya sites. Through analysis of the different forms of the skulls, osteologists are able to differentiate between subtle differences in deformation styles to understand what these differences may mean. Interpretation of these different cranium types has been debated, but it is clear the shapes differed based on time and region. Spanish and other European records also provided detailed descriptions of cranium modification within their historical records. Some of the Spanish documentation included the different methods and materials used for cranium modification. Archaeological remains including artistic depictions or figurines exhibiting modified skull shape help to illuminate the importance of distinguishing one's self through the various types of modification.

Shapes

There are as many as 14 different cranial shapes caused by several different types of purposeful modification or deformation techniques used by members of the Maya society. Neonatal deformation was performed in two main ways: compression of the head with pads and adjusted bindings, or restraining the child on specially designed cradles. Often, a binding device was attached to the forehead so instead of growing naturally into a round or circular form, the child's cranium grew into a long, and tapered form which indented above the brow line. These different modifications resulted in an abundant amount of stress on the new child's body, and often led to death.

The two main head shapes of cranial modification for the Maya were erect deformation and oblique deformation. Erect deformation was modification through the use of cradle boards, which often left the occipital flattening asymmetrical, and affected a child's mobility. Oblique deformation was modification through the use of a paddle applied to the head and was sometimes in use with a frontal board and bandaging. This type of deformation did not cause problems with mobility. Practiced by all members of society, there were distinct differences of temporal and regional preferences.

During the Preclassic period, 2000 [BCE](#) – 250 [CE](#), Maya skull modification imitated the head form of Olmec gods depicted throughout Olmec artwork. With the use of new and different techniques emerging in the Classic period, 250-900 CE, new cranial modification styles were endured, possibly as an indicator of membership within a kin group, or as a sign of a specific status. Additionally, in the Classic period, the general population used the erect deformation style of modification, while children expected to have high-status positions were given oblique deformation. Around 900 CE, the modification style standardized, and most human remains were found with tall skulls

and flattened foreheads, the same modifications documented by the Spaniards when they arrived in Mesoamerica.

Regional differences in cranial modification styles were also evident. Within the Western Maya lowlands, the popular style of modification imitated the shape of the Maize God's head, and therefore, more people were discovered to have slanted skulls. Across the Guatemala highlands, erect deformation shapes were more likely to be used, and sometimes a band was placed vertically down the head to separate the head into two distinct sections. Cranial modification was able to draw lines between different ethnic groups, as well as represent social status/hierarchy within an individual culture.

Significance

Members of the community were expected to go through cranium modification as a part of a child's integration into the society. Maya men aspired to look like their ruler, Pakal, who was meant to represent incarnations of the deities. Pakal's body was shaped to resemble motifs and images of what the Sun and Maize gods were expected to look like. Evidence of the social hierarchy of the Maya was shown in pottery, figurines, drawings, monuments, and [architecture](#) picturing high-status elites with the oblique cranium modification. The oblique style cranium modification, the style endured by Pakal, may have also meant to shape the head like a jaguar, a figure extremely important to Maya religion, sacred to their culture, and a status of power. Additionally, Maya women standards of beauty were also based on the Maize God. Overall, cranial modifications are significant because of their relation with deities and power symbols of the Maya and the outwardly performative aspect displaying specific characteristics of a member within the Maya culture and society.

Motivation

Due to a lack of written records on the reasons or motivation for cranial modification, the reason the head was the center of this modification is still not clear. One reason is possibly the need for children to be protected when they are born. The Maya believed when children were born, they were vulnerable and thus needed to be protected from soul loss and evil winds. The soul was encased within the head, and therefore these newly souled infants needed to be guarded; cranium modification was one of the ways to protect the soul from being snatched from the newborn. The head was understood to be a portal into a person's true essence or essential entity, which could be harmed, stolen, or manipulated. Performing cranial modification as soon as the child was born ensured the soul, or essence, of the child was fully protected.

Additionally, hair was seen as a way to preserve the essence of the soul, *tonalli*, from leaving the head of the body. Cutting the hair of a boy too soon was thought to diminish that individual's knowledge and reason. Lastly, *Tzompantli*, or skull racks, were associated with passage to the celestial world, and the heads on the rack were believed to contain the essence of the individual spirits. Therefore, by killing an enemy and removing their skulls from their bodies, the essence of the individual was violated.

Dental modification



An example of inlay dental modification

[Dental modification](#) may have been a way to identify with a lineage, polity, ruler, or region. The modification of teeth was dependent on social status, as well as location.

The Maya practiced two different types of tooth modification, filing and inlay. Filing was altering the tooth shape to create notches, grooves, or points. This type of dental modification appeared during the Early Preclassic period (1400-1000 [BCE](#)) and was completed with stone abraders and water. Inlay was drilling holes to insert different materials, and was popular throughout the Middle Preclassic period (900-600 BCE). In the remainder of the time periods the two were used simultaneously, but filing was much more common overall.

Most likely teeth were modified as a part of ritual or for aesthetic purposes, and younger children usually did not have modified teeth. Once their [permanent teeth](#) had arrived, adolescent warriors had their [teeth filed](#) to sharp points to give them a fierce appearance, and as a further mark of status. Maya women filed their teeth, or had holes drilled into them where precious stones or luxury materials, such as jade, pyrite, hematite, or turquoise could be inlaid into the teeth. High-status women often had their teeth filed, in different patterns, and would have [jadeite](#), [hematite](#), [pyrite](#), [turquoise](#), or other decorations inset into holes drilled in their teeth. Depending on the material, the meaning of the inlay varied. For example, jade symbolized pure breath or the ability to express elegant speech.

Evidence

Overall, little evidence for the relationship between socioeconomic status and types of dental modification exists. Most evidence comes from documentation of Europeans in the 16th century who viewed the processes of dental modification. However, these accounts can be problematic as they are filled with bias, and much of the process may be recorded incorrectly, or emphasized in a way to villainize the Maya. More concrete evidence is found through archaeological of ceramics or iconography, and osteological remains of Maya people themselves. Iconographic or images of dental modification, including filling and inlay, are pictured on ceramics or within paintings found at Maya or other Mesoamerican sites. Additionally, teeth of Maya individuals have been excavated from Maya sites and analyzed by dendrologists and other dental specialists recognized dental disease associated with excess filling or drilling of the teeth. This means dental modification was occurring on living subjects. Dental diseases found on the remains of the teeth of Maya individuals shows evidence for excessive dental modifications. Additionally, some of the dental remains were inlaid with various stones, and were filed in a variety of ways.

Significance

Modification of the teeth was important as different teeth styles exhibited certain characteristics and motifs important to Maya religion, and social status. "Modified dentition conveyed ideas about wealth, threat, and the nature of speech."^[12] Incisors were filed in "T" shape to represent "wind" motifs, as wind was especially important to the Maya embodying the "life force" and a way to honor the maize god. Pakal, the Maya King, had his teeth filed in the shape of a "T" as a way to change the structure of his facial features to make it look as though he were squinting, a direct reflection of the maize god. Teeth were an advertisement of status and as it was an abundant amount of pain, it was likely a rite of passage into adulthood, signifying the ability to tolerate pain. Overall, dental modification was meant to show a specific kind of status, despite being endured by both men and women of various classes. Enduring this type of pain exhibited traits about the overall character of an individual, and congratulated members for reaching a milestone of life.

Skin modification

Body paint, tattoos, and scarification were all used in different ways by the Maya to signify important events in one's life, as well as to symbolize differing class distinctions. As evidence of skin modification from human remains cannot be studied, the evidence for tattooing, scarification, and body paint among the Maya comes from iconographic images such as pottery and murals, artifacts such as tools and vessels used for storing pigment, as well as ethnohistoric accounts.

Body paint



Mural from Bonampak of elite man being painted red

Body paint patterns were incredibly localized and color and design varied according to location. Two of the most widely used colors among the Maya were red, which was made of [cinnabar](#) or [vermilion](#), with [hematite](#) and [iron ore](#) added. Another popular culture, and one that was possibly the most valued among the Maya was a blue or green pigment made with [indigo](#) and a mineral called [Palygorskite](#). This blue/green color was highly valued because it was associated not only with [jade](#), but with sacrifice to the gods as well. Spanish explorer [Diego de Landa](#) states in one of his accounts:

"...they had the custom of painting their faces and bodies red... they thought it very pleasing...the victim....having smeared him with blue... they brought him up to the round alter..."

The evidence for body painting among the Maya largely comes from various murals. One mural found in [Bonampak, Chiapa](#) shows a man being painted red from the neck down by a servant while a woman's face is painted red. Another mural found at [Calakmul](#) depicts merchants and non-elites wearing face paint of various colors and designs, suggesting that paint may have been used to differentiate class and gender.

Tattoos and scarification

While there is a physical difference between [scarification](#) and [tattoos](#), the Maya may not have differentiated between the two practices. Tattoos and scarification were used to mark significant events in Maya life. Diego de Landa says: "A thief from the highest class is punished by having his face tattooed on both sides from the beard to the forehead. ... the young men do not tattoo except to a slight degree until marriage."

Scholar Cara Tremain argues that some tattoos and scars may have been associated with the elite, as "killing" and "rebirth" of the skin through cutting creates an association with death and the rebirth of deities. Tremain also argues that some types of tattooing and scarification symbolized valor and bravery. This theory is supported by the accounts of Diego de Landa who said, "They tattooed their bodies, and the more they do this, the more brave and valiant are they considered, as tattooing is accompanied with great suffering, and is done in this way. Those who do the work first painted the part which they wish with color and afterwards they delicately cut in the paintings, and so with the blood and coloring matter the marks remained in the body. This work is done a little at a time on account of the extreme pain, and afterwards also they were quite sick with it, since the designs festered and matter formed. In spite of all this they made fun of those who were not tattooed."

Piercings

The practice of piercing one's ears, lips, nose, or cheeks was shared by all Maya, but it was the type of jewelry worn that was used to differentiate social status. Children would be pierced at a young age as well, with [ear flares and spools](#) getting increasingly bigger as the child aged, [stretching](#) the ear. The majority of evidence for Maya piercings comes from archaeological remains of jewelry found in tombs, such as [labrets](#) and ear spools. Ethnohistorical accounts also provide us evidence for the amount and high quality of the piercings the Maya wore. In an account of his travels the Spanish Bishop Diego Lopez de Cogolludo stated: "The holes in the noses and ears [were filled with] nose and ear pieces of cuzas and other stones of varied colors."

Visual modification

In [Relación de las cosas de Yucatán](#), [Diego de Landa](#) reports that Maya mothers would artificially induce [cross-eyedness](#) in infants.^[16] Cross-eyedness was seen as a valued characteristic and it has been suggested that the Maya deity [Kinich Ahau](#) was depicted as cross-eyed as well.

Warfare

The Mayas employed warfare in each period of their development for the purposes of obtaining sacrificial victims, settling competitive rivalries, acquiring critical resources and gaining control of trade routes. Warfare was important to the Maya religion, because raids on surrounding areas provided the victims required for, as well as slaves for the construction of temples. Large-scale battles were also fought to determine and defend territories as well as secure economic power. The Mayas defended their cities with defensive structures such as palisades, gateways, and earthworks. Some cities had a wall within the outer wall, so advancing enemies would be trapped in a killing alley, where they could be slaughtered in great number. During the post-Classic period, the amount of internal warfare increased greatly as the region became more politically fragmented. Armies were enlarged, and in some cases, mercenaries were hired. The resulting destruction of many urban centers contributed to the decline of the Maya.

Military organization

The ruler of a Maya city was the supreme war captain. Some only dictated military activity, while others participated in the battle. There was a core of warriors that served year-round as guards and obtained sacrificial victims, but most large Maya cities and religious centers had militias. These men were paid to fight for the duration of the battle. Then they would return to their fields or crafts. The militia units were headed by nacoms, hereditary war chiefs, that employed ritual as well as strategic methods in warfare. Some nacoms were only chief strategists, and the troops were led into battle by batabs, or officers. In a large war, even commoners who did not have weapons would fight using hunting tools and by hurling rocks. "In the highlands, women occasionally fought in battles according to native chronicles" (Foster, 144).

Tactics

The jungle terrain of [Mesoamerica](#) made it difficult for large armies to reach their destination. The warriors who were familiar with the battle landscape could strategically retreat into familiar wilderness. Other war tactics included the siege of cities and the formation of alliances with lesser enemies to defeat more prominent ones. There is evidence that canoes were used to attack cities, located on lakes and rivers. In the late Classic period, destructive warfare methods, such as burning, became more prevalent.

Rituals

Warfare was a ritual process, which was believed to be sanctioned by the gods. Military leaders, in many instances, also had religious authority. Before going into battle, the armies would call upon the gods with dances and music of drums, whistles, conch shell horns and singing. The drumming and war cries would signify the start of the battle. The armies also carried religious idols into battle to inspire the warriors. They fought fiercely because they believed that death on the battle field secured them eternal bliss, whereas capture by the enemy was regarded as worse than any death. When an enemy was defeated, the victorious army exploited the religious icons and sometimes humiliated the defeated leader with prolonged captivity. The treatment of prisoners by the victorious was brutal and often ended in decapitation. The Maya also had a ritual of giving blood as a religious offering. They took the blood from their genitals and tongue then, afterwards, they would drip their blood onto a piece of paper and burn it into the sky to show respect to their gods.

Weapons and uniform

Weapons used by the Maya included spear-throwers known as [atlatls](#), blowguns, [obsidian](#) spiked clubs, spears, axes, lances and knives tipped with flint or obsidian blades. Bow and arrows were also used, but not as extensively. Though there were few helmets, they used decorated shields made from woven mats, wood and animal skins for protection. The Maya war leaders dressed to inspire their warriors and terrify their enemies. They usually wore padded cotton armor, a mantle with religious insignia, and elaborate wooden and cloth headdresses, that represented the animal spirit or "way" of the warrior. Metal was not used in battle because of the limited supply.



Ancient Maya Art

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Maya_art

Ancient Maya art comprises the visual arts of the Maya civilization, an eastern and south-eastern Mesoamerican culture made up of a great number of small kingdoms in what is now Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras. Many regional artistic traditions existed side by side, usually coinciding with the changing boundaries of Maya polities. This civilization took shape in the course of the later Preclassic Period (from c. 750 BC to 100 BC), when the first cities and monumental architecture started to develop and the hieroglyphic script came into being. Its greatest artistic flowering occurred during the seven centuries of the Classic Period (c. 250 to 950 CE).

Maya art forms tend to be more stiffly organized during the Early Classic (250-550 CE) and to become more expressive during the Late Classic phase (550-950 CE). In the course of history, influences of various other Mesoamerican cultures were absorbed. In the late Preclassic, the influence of the Olmec style is still discernible (as in the San Bartolo murals), whereas in the Early Classic, the style of central Mexican Teotihuacan made itself felt, just as that of the Toltec in the Postclassic.

After the demise of the Classic kingdoms of the central lowlands, ancient Maya art went through an extended Postclassic phase (950-1550 CE) centered on the Yucatan peninsula, before the upheavals of the sixteenth century destroyed courtly culture and put an end to the Maya artistic tradition. Traditional art forms mainly survived in weaving, pottery, and the design of peasant houses.

Maya art history

The nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century publications on Maya art and archaeology by Stephens, Catherwood, Maudslay, Maler and Charnay for the first time made available reliable drawings and photographs of major Classic Maya monuments.



Studying a ruin at Izamal, Catherwood engraving

Following this initial phase, the 1913 publication of Herbert Spinden's 'A Study of Maya Art' laid the foundation for all later developments of Maya art history (including iconography). The book gives an analytical treatment of themes and motifs, particularly the ubiquitous serpent and dragon motifs, and a review of the 'material arts', such as the composition of temple facades, roof combs and mask panels. Spinden's chronological treatment of Maya art was later (1950) refined by the motif analysis of the architect and specialist in archaeological drawing, [Tatiana Proskouriakoff](#), in her book 'A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture'. [Kubler's](#) 1969 inventory of Maya iconography, containing a site-by-site treatment of 'commemorative' images and a topical treatment of ritual and mythical images (such as the 'triadic sign'), concluded a period of gradual increase of knowledge that was soon to be overshadowed by new developments.

Starting in the early 1970s, the historiography of the Maya kingdoms – first of all, Palenque – came to occupy the forefront. Art-historical interpretation joined the historical approach pioneered by Proskouriakoff as well as the mythological approach initiated by [M.D. Coe](#), with a professor of art, [Linda Schele](#), serving as a driving force. Schele's seminal interpretations of Maya art are found throughout her work, especially in *The Blood of Kings*, written together with art historian [M. Miller](#). Maya art history was also spurred by the enormous increase in sculptural and ceramic imagery, due to extensive archaeological excavations, as well as to organized looting on an unprecedented scale. From 1973 onwards, M.D. Coe published a series of books offering pictures and interpretations of unknown Maya vases, with the Popol Vuh Twin myth for an explanatory model. In 1981, Robicsek and Hales added an inventory and classification of Maya vases painted in codex style, thereby revealing even more of a hitherto barely known spiritual world.

As to subsequent developments, important issues in Schele's iconographic work have been elaborated by [Karl Taube](#). New approaches to Maya art include studies of ancient Maya ceramic workshops, the representation of bodily experience and the senses in Maya art, and of hieroglyphs considered as iconographic units. Meanwhile, the number of monographs devoted to the monumental art of specific courts is growing. A good impression of present Mexican and North American art historical scholarship can be gathered from the exhibition catalog 'Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya' (2004).

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